



C A L I F O R N I A D E P A R T M E N T O F

Mental Health

Coalinga State Hospital

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FIRST STATE MENTAL HOSPITAL IN 50 YEARS OPENS IN CENTRAL VALLEY

New Facility Will Keep Predators Out of Communities, Treat Sex Offenders

COALINGA – California's newest state mental health hospital and the first constructed in more than a half century, Coalinga State Hospital, opened today. State and local dignitaries touted the facility as a leading example for mental health service delivery for challenging populations, as well as an economic engine for the Central Valley. Located adjacent to Pleasant Valley State Prison, Coalinga State Hospital will begin treating patients –mostly sexually violent predators who will be transferred from Atascadero State Hospital – in early September.

The maximum-secured forensic facility will ultimately hold up to 1,500 patients – both sexually violent predators and seriously mentally ill inmates from the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

"This facility is a critical part of Governor Schwarzenegger's very clear goal to protect Californians from sexual predators," explained Department of Mental Health Director Stephen Mayberg. "Rather than having some of the most serious sex offenders released into the community after serving their criminal sentences, these predators will come to this maximum-security psychiatric hospital to receive critical treatment and evaluation."

Coalinga State Hospital's Executive Director Tom Voss noted that the hospital is a community within a community. "CSH is a full-service hospital, dedicated to rehabilitating the seriously mentally ill."

In addition to Mayberg and Voss, speakers at the dedication ceremony included Senator Dean Florez, Congressman Jim Costa and Coalinga Mayor Ron Lander. Following the official ceremonies, the facility was opened to the public for tours.

The 1999-2000 Budget Bill authorized the Department of Mental Health and the Department of Corrections to construct a new mental hospital. After a two-year search and considering 29 potential sites, DMH formally selected Coalinga. It took another four years to build the facility, at a cost of \$388 million.

When the facility is fully operational, it will be the largest employer in the Coalinga area, with an annual operating budget of \$152 million and more than 2,000 staff.

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